7

A Racialised Social Question: Pension Reform in *Apartheid* South Africa

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Introduction

It is apparent that the *apartheid* regime promoted a racialised and exclusionary system, but we still need to understand how social security policies fit into the broader *apartheid* project. When the National Party (NP) came to power in 1948, it inherited a social security system based on means-tested social assistance programmes for the needy (the elderly and disabled) and a fragmented system of contributory pensions (see Chap. 6). However, the *apartheid* regime undertook no major social security reforms, which is puzzling. Focusing on social security policies for the elderly, as this group is the most likely to receive social security benefits from the state, it is curious that the state did not push for the creation of a state-run national contributory pension scheme because the *apartheid* government was otherwise willing to pass reforms and content with a strong state. In addition, why did the regime continue to include blacks

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as non-contributory pension beneficiaries (albeit at lower benefit levels) when in other areas the regime had no problem implementing harsh exclusionary policies for black South Africans? While the *apartheid* regime sought to promote the interests of their white, primarily Afrikaner, constituencies, the aim of this chapter is to understand how pension policy developments were justified within the *apartheid* ideology as well as the regime's reactions to global discourses. The argument is that self-interests may be a driver in policymaking, but policymakers also seek to justify their decisions in relation to dominant discourses and ideas, and, consequently, by studying the normative underpinnings of policy, we can find explanations to counter-intuitive scenarios such as this one.

Thus, this chapter addresses the following question: what ideas and concepts underpinned social security policies for the elderly in *apartheid* South Africa? In analysing this question, I use as my theoretical framework the "onion skin model", as discussed in the next section. My analysis focuses on the ideas and perceptions of white politicians because only the white population had any say in policymaking in this period (up to 1953, some coloured people could vote, and up to 1959, the African population had three white representatives in parliament). I do not disregard the voices of other population groups, nor do I condone such an exclusionary approach to politics and policymaking. However, since my goal is to understand the ideas that lay behind pension policies during the *apartheid* era, my primary focus should be the perceptions and justifications of the people involved in policymaking. Other population groups and the international society can indirectly play a role in influencing the positions of white politicians, and this is also reflected in the analysis when relevant.

In focusing on the ideational basis of social security policies in *apartheid* South Africa, the chapter fills a void in the literature. There is a substantial body of work on *apartheid* (i.e. Giliomee 2003; Hodder-Williams and Hugo 1976; Lodge 2017; Posel 1991; Ritner 1967; van der Westhuizen 2007; Welsh 2009). Only a few studies take an ideational approach (Klotz 1999; Legassick 1974; Norval 1996), but they do not focus on social security policies. There is some work on social security during *apartheid* (van der Berg 1997; Devereux 2007; Patel 1992, 2015;

Simkins 1984; Scully 2019), but none of these takes an ideational approach.

My analysis builds on a reading of parliamentary debates (Hansards) and historical accounts (see the appendix for methodological considerations). I predominantly conduct a qualitative reading of the material with the purpose of understanding the ideas and positions of different actors with respect to policy, but I have also conducted quantitative counts of keywords in the *Hansards* to gauge the dominance of and shift in overall key ideas over time (Figs. 7.1, 7.2, and 7.3). In terms of terminology, I focus on formal social security policies for the elderly—contributory pension schemes and non-contributory old-age pensions—thereby omitting the important work of community-based organisations providing care during the *apartheid* era (see instead Patel 1992). Non-contributory pensions are also labelled social pensions, old-age pensions, and social grants. The appendix in Chap. 6 explains the names given to the population groups of South Africa. I use the terms

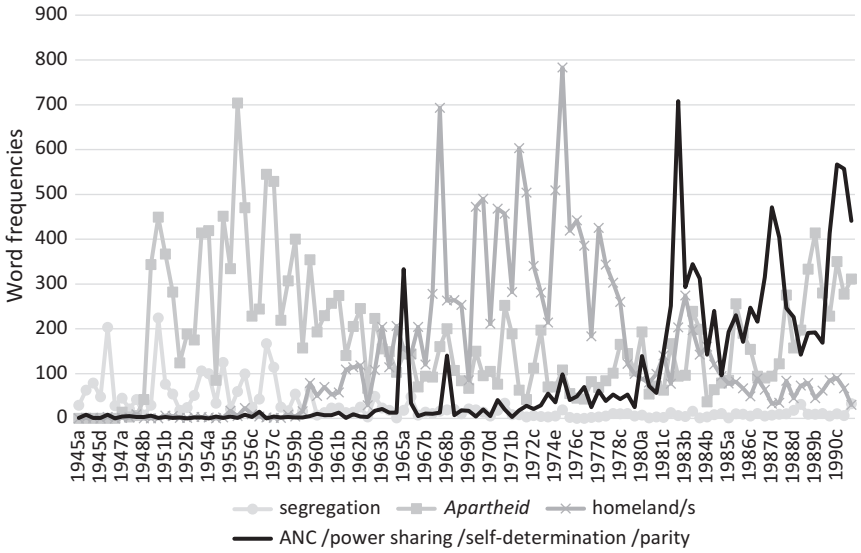

Fig. 7.1 Dominant frames expressed by South African MPs, 1945–1990. (*Source*: The author, based on author's analysis (see Appendix) of the Hansards from the South African House of Assembly, 1945–1990)

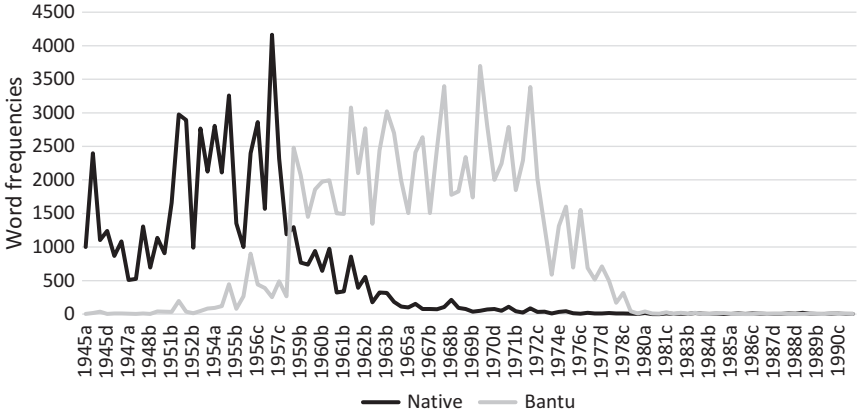

Fig. 7.2 Terms used by South African MPs to reference the African population. (*Source*: The author, based on author's analysis (see appendix) of the Hansards from the South African House of Assembly, 1945–1990)

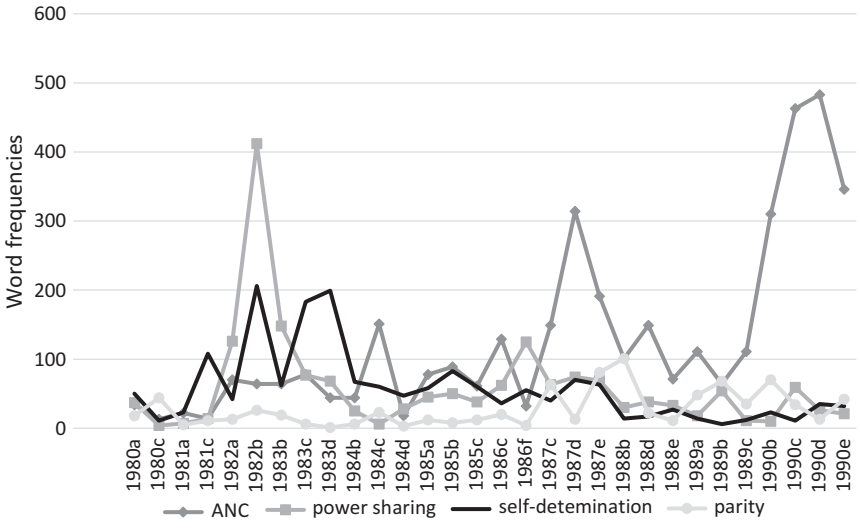

Fig. 7.3 Dominant frames vocalised by South African MPs, 1980–1990. (*Source*: The author, based on author's analysis (see appendix) of the Hansards from the South African House of Assembly, 1980–1990)

generally accepted during the periods of analysis even though some would now qualify as racist or as problematic in some other sense. Considering the extensive reference to concepts and terms used by contemporary actors in my analysis, I do not always use quotation marks for terms that are obviously contemporary.

Changes in Ideas, 1948–1990: An Outline of the Analysis

To explore how ideas justified and legitimised limited pension policy reforms in *apartheid* South Africa, I apply the onion skin model (see Leisering, Chap. 1). Leisering argues that, while pension policies (more broadly "welfare institutions") make up the visible surface of social policy, we have to look underneath the surface to understand the normative infrastructure that shapes social policy reform. At the deepest level, "frames" inform policies and are non-social ideas within which social policies are embedded. These ideas can be related to nation-building and development as well as global frames such as human rights and communism. The normative justifications of social policy are aligned to dominant frames but can also contrapose global frames that key policymakers regarded as illegitimate.

Based on the dominant frames of non-social ideas are four layers of social ideas that, at different levels, provide the ideational underpinnings of social policy. First, at the more abstract level, the "construction of social responsibility" designates the extent to which the state takes responsibility for a social issue and to whom in society this responsibility is directed. The recognition of central "social questions", which require political remedies, informs which social issues the state takes up. For instance, this could include the recognition that the issue of poverty requires political attention. Within the category of broader social questions, specific problem groups are identified, and their social problems are put on the policy agenda (the "policy paradigm"). It is within this policy paradigm that policy solutions are identified, which in turn make

Table 7.1 The onion skin model applied to South Africa, 1948–1960

Frame	"**Separate development**"—on how to deal with the influx of "natives" to cities and the "purity" of the white race Global frames: human rights and communism
Constructing social responsibility	**Racially graded social responsibility** – **The Afrikaner *volk*** (within "white unity") – "Europeans to carry non-Europeans on their back"
Social question	**Racialised social question** legitimised through **civilisation argument** – Livelihoods of "civilised" workers – The welfare of poor whites (separate from other racial groups)
Policy paradigms	Segmented concept of social problems and problem groups: focus on **Afrikaner upliftment**
Welfare institutions	**Racially graded pension schemes** – No national contributory pension scheme, instead disparity of funds – Social pension for the neediest and a benefit rate based on race

up the visible social policies ("welfare institutions"). Each period of analysis starts with a table summarising the application of the onion skin model to South Africa, which also structures the in-depth narrative.

Following Leisering's model, I start with the ideational frames that dominated the discourse among white members of parliament (MPs) during *apartheid*. Figure 7.1 illustrates how frames have shifted over time. In 1948, when the National Party came to power, the frame "*apartheid*"—the idea of separate development for different racial groups—dominated. This changed in the early 1960s when the concept of homeland/homelands—the idea of "independent nations" for different racial groups—came into more frequent use. As I will elaborate in the analysis below, this change does not indicate a general shift in the fundamental belief of racial separation but powerfully shows how frames changed to ensure continued legitimisation for (a lack of) policy reforms. Around 1980 there was another shift. The attempt to promote the idea of "independent nations" for Africans outside of white-dominated areas failed, and the *apartheid* regime increasingly came under pressure from both within and abroad. Figure 7.1 illustrates a period with no clear

ideational direction, which in turn had consequences for pension policy; a point that will be explored in the penultimate section.

The shifts in dominating frames delineate the periods into which the analysis is divided, although the partition into specific periods is artificial as frames and ideas are fluid and continuously refined or re-examined. Table 7.1 summarises the first period of analysis, 1948–1960, following Leisering's onion skin model, which I further elaborate on in the following sections (text in bold are the key focus areas).

1948–1960: "Separate Development" and the Problem of "Civilised Labour"

> [T]he election of the National Party in 1948 marked not so much a turning point in South African history as the intensification of a process which had been going on for three hundred years. (Wilson and Ramphele 1989: 204)

As the world moved towards a recognition of global human rights and decolonisation, South Africa marched in the opposite direction with deeply entrenched social and racial separation and the development of an increasingly draconian state. The National Party that came into power stood in opposition to the previous governing party, the United Party (UP), which J.C. Smuts led. Although in the 1940s there was some extension of social benefits to Africans (Chap. 6), the UP government also harboured fears of social mixing across race, and "Smuts never wavered in his belief that Africans were inferior people" (Thompson 2006: 177). Thus, while power changed hands in the parliament in 1948, the main political parties (the NP and UP, the official opposition) generally agreed on the need for social separation based on race, and there was continuous support for discriminatory social security policies in the national parliament. However, some critical voices were represented in the Parliament, by groups like the Labour Party, the Communist Party, and the "natives'" white representatives (the latter representation was removed in 1959) (Norval 1996). Although most MPs then shared ideas

of separate development, the NP distinguished itself from the previous government's central concept of "segregation" by promoting the idea of "*apartheid*" (Fig. 7.1).

Frame: "*Apartheid*"—The Idea of Separate Development

The National Party started to use the term "*apartheid*" after the party lost elections in 1943, but it was in the 1948 election campaigns that the concept started to gain greater expression (Evans 2017; Giliomee 2003). Scholars dismiss the idea that there was a blueprint or an *apartheid* grand plan. Instead, the concept of *apartheid* developed in contrast to the opposing UP's concept of "segregation" and global frames such as communism and human rights. The *apartheid* frame was also constructed to respond to the perceived challenges of controlling the African population and maintaining white dominance (Posel 1991; Norval 1996). In order to discuss the *apartheid* frame in more detail and how it is different from segregation, it is useful to first present an excerpt from NP leader D.F. Malan's campaign speech in Paarl, South Africa, 29 March 1948:

> There are two sections of thought in South Africa in regard to the policy affecting the non-European community. On the one hand, there is the policy of equality, which advocates equal rights within the same political structure for all civilized and educated persons, irrespective of race or colour, and the gradual granting of the franchise to non-Europeans as they become qualified to make use of democratic rights. On the other hand, there is the policy of separation (*apartheid*) which has grown from the experience of the established European population of the country, and which is based on the Christian principles of justice and reasonableness. Its aim is the maintenance and protection of the European population of the country as a pure White race, the maintenance and protection of the indigenous racial groups as separate communities, with prospects of developing into self-supporting communities within their own areas, and the stimulation of national pride, self-respect, and mutual respect among the various races of the country. (Malan 1948: 2–3)

Malan's reference to the "policy of equality" relates to the segregation policies of Smuts' government. Similarly to the NP, Smuts and his government were concerned with how to control the African population in ways that would limit their influx into the cities while maintaining white South Africans' access to cheap black labour, and the policy of segregation was also aimed at maintaining white political domination. However, Smuts underestimated many Afrikaners' fear of "the 'swamping' of white civilisation" (Terreblanche 2002: 314) and the extent to which many perceived that the policy of segregation had failed to stem the increasing urbanisation of the African population (Evans 2017; Norval 1996).

Apartheid was also framed in opposition to communism, which was perceived as a primary threat to Afrikaner nationalism because the communist doctrine completely disregarded racial differences. As explained below, Afrikaner nationalism—the idea of an Afrikaner *volk*—was an important element in the NP's rise to power, and, consequently, the communist demand for equal rights and a breakdown of racial barriers "was a thrust at the very heart of [the Afrikaners'] ethnic existence" (Norval 1996: 136). During the *apartheid* era, anyone advocating for equal rights across racial groups was regarded as a communist, although many of these advocates were, in fact, anti-communist (Norval 1996).

Apartheid was based on ideologies of nationalism and religious particularism within which pro-*apartheid* intellectuals emphasised that the differentiation between races was divinely ordained and each race had its own character and calling. Surprisingly perhaps, they argued that any policy of exploitation and oppression by whites was in conflict with the Christian basis of Afrikaner national life; instead, the NP vowed to facilitate opportunities for each racial group to develop according to its *volk*'s character (Welsh 2009; Norval 1996). As Malan put it that March day in 1948:

> In their areas, the non-European racial groups will have full opportunities for development in every sphere and will be able to develop their own institutions and social services whereby the forces of the progressive non-Europeans can be harnessed for their own national development. (Malan 1948: 3)

Hence, whereas segregation entailed "the concept of *one* community embracing different but interdependent elements", *apartheid* dictated "the concept of *several* alien and fundamentally incompatible national groups" (Ritner 1967: 27, my emphasis). In theory then, different "non-white racial groups" were not "inferior" to the "white race" but rather "irreconcilably different" (Ritner 1967: 27). However, in practice, NP politicians continued to perceive whites as superior to blacks. Moreover, because they did not believe that actual implementation of geographical separation was possible, they saw it as their ordained duty to provide "trusteeship and guidance" to the black population (Ritner 1967).

The idea of separate development in individual "nation-states" (i.e. homelands) only gained traction from the late 1950s to the early 1960s (see below and Fig. 7.1). In the first decade of NP rule, the focus was on the maintenance of the white population as a "pure white race" and complete eradication of any interracial mixing, although with a primary focus on the uplifting of the white Afrikaner community.

Racially Graded Social Responsibility

As in the pre-*apartheid* era, in the 1950s, white politicians on both sides of the House also argued that their social responsibility should primarily be for the white population because how "long can the Europeans carry the non-Europeans on their backs?" (USA 1954: Mr Loubser: 3501). Yet there was a marked difference between segregationist and *apartheid* discourses. The former made a distinction between "Europeans" (English- and Afrikaans-speaking whites) and "natives" (the African population) and treated each as a homogeneous group. The *apartheid* discourse, in contrast, promoted the idea of *volkseie*, which denotes the attributes that are particular to an ethnic/national group, i.e. *volk*, with a particular interest in the characteristics and identity of the Afrikaner *volk* (Norval 1996).

To elaborate, an underlying factor in the National Party's victory in the 1948 elections was the resurgence of Afrikaner nationalism, which united Afrikaners in a cross-class *volksbeweging* (people's movement). The governing alliance of Smuts and Hertzog from the 1920s to the 1940s had

largely downplayed past conflicts between Afrikaans- and English-speaking white South Africans, but many Afrikaners felt that this alliance was perpetuating the dominance of the English-speaking community. The 1930s and 1940s saw rapid social change and (continued) substantial economic inequality between Afrikaners and the English. In addition, Afrikaners perceived the United Party's retention of symbolic connections to Britain and the rapid urbanisation of Africans as the real threats to their identity (Welsh 2009; van der Westhuizen 2007). The National Party took advantage of this situation. As Terreblanche (2002: 298) explains:

> By overemphasising the alleged injustices done to Afrikaners by British imperialism and foreign capitalism and exaggerating the dangers of *swart oorstroming* ('black swamping'), Afrikaner ideologues succeeded in creating a 'syndrome of victimisation'—i.e., the idea that the existence and interests of the Afrikaner *volk* were endangered by other population groups.

Thus, although the logic of *volkseie* would later be transposed to other "groups" in society, the concern of the Afrikaner nationalist movement was initially focused on the construction and purification of the Afrikaner community, and, as a result, the social responsibility of the *apartheid* state was primarily constructed to benefit the Afrikaans population (Van der Westhuizen 2007; Norval 1996).

Consequently, the focus on *volkseie* enabled the NP to emphasise its social responsibility towards the Afrikaner volk over that of the (British) English-speaking white South Africans. However, NP politicians vacillated between using the term "race" to refer to *volk* (to differentiate between groups within the white population) and to "colour" (to differentiate between "white" and "black"). In distancing themselves from "non-white" groups, Afrikaner nationals emphasised white unity and the whites as the "civilised" population in contrast to the "uncivilised" black population.

Hence, the construction of social responsibility was categorised across racial lines. The white "race"—and within this group, particularly the Afrikaner *volk*— was the *apartheid* state's primary concern. The state

paternalistically regarded the black population as an "uncivilised" group that needed to be "carried by the Europeans" and, therefore, required some minimum of support, for instance, social pensions.

The Racialised Social Question Legitimised by the Civilisation Argument

The concept of "civilisation" has been important in white-dominated regimes since the eighteenth century: white "civilisation" was contrasted with African "savagery", thereby justifying the white population's dominance and privilege over other population groups. The rhetoric of "civilisation" remained an important means by which the NP mobilised support throughout the *apartheid* era (Van der Westhuizen 2007).

The 1930s and 1940s saw an increasing influx of low-skilled Afrikaners into the cities in search of work. Having grown up in rural areas, they were ill-prepared for city life and faced strong competition from the African population in the labour market. In addition, at this time, the low-income segments of all South African groups in the cities were increasingly intermingling, something which alarmed Afrikaans nationalists, as, in their view, they had to protect racial "purity" at all costs (Van der Westhuizen 2007).

Thus, the ruling NP government's social question was, in the first instance, how to ensure the separation of low-income Afrikaners from the African population. This concern was connected to other questions prevalent in South Africa: the "native" question, particularly trying to stem the influx of Africans into the cities, and the "poor white" question, which was dominant in the 1930s (see Seekings, Chap. 6). Nevertheless, the dominant issue in the first decade of *apartheid* was separating the Afrikaans working class from the African working class, which was made possible by labelling the former as "civilised" (i.e. white) and the latter as "uncivilised" (i.e. black) labour (Norval 1996).

Following this, I argue that the social question was racialised. The main social question for the NP government was the "civilised workers question", that is, a call for political remedies to ensure that low-income and low-skilled Afrikaners' economic position would be improved to

prevent their intermingling with other racial groups. The regulation of "black" labour as a social threat to a lesser extent called for social policy remedies but rather those of control and oppression.

Policy Paradigm: Afrikaner Upliftment as the Social Problem

Given that the social question concerned the situation of "civilised" (i.e. white) low-skilled workers, the NP focused on policy solutions that could eliminate the competition between black and white workers. Moreover, the Afrikaners were perceived as the primary problem group, given their disadvantaged position vis-à-vis the white English-speaking population, so the government pursued preferential treatment to ensure Afrikaner upliftment. From an ideational perspective, Afrikaner upliftment was important to ensure the unity of the Afrikaner *volk* by avoiding letting "working-class Afrikaner … consciousness as Afrikaners … be eclipsed by class-consciousness" (Welsh 2009: 13). However, it is also important to note that the NP was relying on low-income Afrikaners for their electoral victory in 1948 and in the many elections that followed (Van der Westhuizen 2007).

In order to improve the socio-economic status of Afrikaners, the *apartheid* state implemented job reservations and training programmes for low-skilled Afrikaners and, in various formal and informal ways, devised the exclusion of Africans from decent employment, such as by entrenching black subordination in employment, non-recognition of black unions, and "closed shop" agreements that gave vetoes to white unions (Van der Westhuizen 2007; Welsh 2009). This created lucrative employment opportunities for Afrikaners, particularly in the public sector and parastatals, which "contributed considerably to the rapid … embourgeoisement of Afrikaners" (Terreblanche 2002: 303). Afrikaners' share of the national personal income went from 27.9 per cent in 1946 to 32.4 per cent in 1960. In addition, the inequality gap between English- and Afrikaans-speaking whites closed: in 1946, the Afrikaners' per capita income was about 40 per cent of English-speakers' per capita income, whereas in the late 1970s it was 80 per cent (Van der Westhuizen 2007).

Racially Graded Pension Schemes

The NP had clear priorities concerning pension policies: "Our first consideration and our first interest is the lot of the White worker and the European old people in South Africa. That is our first interest and our first responsibility" (USA 1955, Dr de Wet: 1499–1500). During this period, the opposition raised proposals to introduce a national contributory pension scheme, but the government was content with regulating private pension funds and promoting separate contributory pension schemes in the public and parastatal sectors to which Afrikaners were given preferential access.

Opposition parties repeatedly proposed motions to introduce a national contributory pension scheme. One argument for such a scheme was that under the current system of means-tested social pensions and some private pension schemes, many had no social security in old age. In fact, "it is the people in the middle-income group who find things difficult today" (USA 1954, Mr Tighy: 342–343). Another argument was that a national contributory scheme could replace the existing expensive social pensions, thereby actually enabling the country to save money (USA 1953, Mr Eaton: 728; USA 1955, Mr Lewis: 1465–1472). Finally, there was also the aspiration to "[be in] line with other Commonwealth and European countries" (USA 1951, Mr Eaton: 6702).

While the opposition parties called for a national contributory scheme, there was disagreement about whether such a scheme should include all South Africans. The Labour Party argued that the government could not eliminate non-Europeans from the definition of "worker", and, therefore, "non-Europeans … are as much entitled to … a pension on a contributory basis as any European" (USA 1954, Mr Eaton: 350–351). However, the UP-dominated opposition's main view was based on the civilisation argument that demands for a national contributory scheme "flows from the advance in our civilised standards of living" (USA 1959, Mr Durrant: 540).

The NP government was unsurprisingly in line with the civilisation argument and also emphasised that the circumstances between the "native" worker and a qualified artisan "differ too greatly" (USA 1960, Mr van der Heever: 1865). However, the NP government did not accept

the idea of *one* national scheme because not only did the circumstances across racial groups differ, but one also could not "establish a pension scheme for mineworkers on the same basis as one for public servants", and so "the whole solution to the pension problem is to be found in…various schemes" (USA 1960, Mr van der Heever: 1865).

Thus, the NP government persistently argued against the idea of introducing a national contributory pension scheme, suggesting that such a scheme would be costly and that the white population would contribute disproportionally to other population groups, given that the new scheme would require, at least initially, state support:

> If there were a change to a national pension scheme to-day it would have to be taken through to the bitter end and I ask the supporters of this motion whether they have considered the implications of their proposal for a young country such as South Africa with its small White population and its overwhelming Native population. Speakers have said that if we introduce such a pension scheme the Natives and Coloureds will be included in it. Have you ever considered what it would cost a certain section of the people, people who contribute to taxation to-day, and from whose pocket the extra taxation would have to come? (USA 1955, Mr du Plessis: 1519–1520)

Instead, the government sought to promote the extension of private pension funds with the 1956 Pension Funds Act that served as the legislative foundation to regulate pension schemes to which employers and employees would both contribute. As explained by the Minister of Finance, the government saw a range of advantages to this new arrangement, such as it did not encourage dependency and minimised the need for social pensions in the future:

> The point I want to make is that these private pension funds serve the great social object of getting people to look after themselves, of being self-supporting and independent … For that reason there should be every encouragement from the side of the Government, and … [T]here is positive support in the form of the taxation relief given to the employer as well as to the employee contributing to a fund of this nature … if these schemes are established and extended, we can expect in future to have less provision made in the Pensions and Social Welfare Votes. (USA 1959, Minister of Finance: 573–575)

Furthermore, the government praised itself for instituting a non-discriminatory policy: "The attitude we on this side adopt when we plead for the encouragement of the various private schemes is that we do not exclude the non-Whites. We say it is a matter for the employer and the employee themselves" (USA 1960, Mr de Villiers: 1881). However, as the opposition pointed out, although some schemes were available for the "natives", "to a very large extent the Natives are not in a position to make voluntary contributions and they are consequently not able to draw benefits" (USA 1960, Dr de Beer: 1878).

The NP government not only encouraged private pension funds but was also instrumental in expanding contributory pension schemes to public-service and parastatal employees in administration, the police force, prisons, the defence force, and the railways, among other sectors in which Afrikaners benefitted from preferential employment. Through employment, white staff were granted membership in these contributory pension funds, whereas black staff were, at best, entitled to a gratuity at the time of retirement (USA 1956, Minister of Transport: 1117–1118). Interestingly, while over the years the immense costs of the social pensions were a repeated concern (see below), there was much less mention of the costs of keeping the public sector pension funds sound, although budget allocations were made for such purposes most years (USA 1955, Mr Hepple: 3391; RSA 1967, Mr van der Walt: 4890). Thus, the budget for public-service pensioners was heavily in favour of the white employees.

Together with the white workers, the condition of the "European old people" was the government's first priority (USA 1955, Dr de Wet: 1499–1500). This also implies that the situation of elderly blacks was only of secondary concern, and after 1948 when the NP government came to power, the government sought to restrict the numbers of Africans receiving social pensions by encouraging a stricter application of the eligibility criteria, and although many more Africans received a pension over other population groups and this number increased in the 1950s and 1960s, the number of African beneficiaries decreased relative to white, coloured and Indian beneficiaries (see Table 7.2). Similarly, while the nominal value of social pensions increased for all population groups, Africans continued to be seriously disadvantaged—in 1944, the pension

Table 7.2 Old-age pension beneficiaries in South Africa, 1949–1968

	1949	1951	1955	1957–1958	1968
Numbers					
Europeans	68,265	72,040	84,885	87,313	97,532
Coloured and Indian	40,125	42,980	49,060	49,030	65,359
Natives	199,514	197,332	215,206	217,097	248,640
Total	307,904	312,352	349,151	353,440	411,531
Per cent of total					
Europeans	22.2%	23.1%	24.3%	24.7%	23.7%
Coloured and Indian	13.0%	13.8%	14.1%	13.9%	15.9%
Natives	64.8%	63.2%	61.6%	61.4%	60.4%

Source: The author, data from House of Assembly debates (Hansards), 1949–1968

value for whites was 12 times higher than for Africans, while in 1965 white pensioners received a grant that was 11 times higher (Devereux 2007).

Only very few parliamentarians voiced concerns about the lower rates paid to other population groups, and then it was often because they were elected as their representatives. How small the pensions were for Africans and how unfairly they were administered is well illustrated by this quote from Mr Lee-Warden, representative of the "natives":

> The average pension which is paid to an African today is £13. Now, it is not £13 a week; it is not £13 a month; it is £13 a year! If you break that down it comes to 5s. [shilling] a week. To relate that to the cost of living one realizes how little it is.… It means that one person could buy six loaves of bread, costing 10d. [penny] each, in any one week. (USA 1960, Mr Lee-Warden: 3371–3373)

However, in general, racial discrimination in benefits was unquestioned, seemingly because the differentiated levels of civilisation were an undisputed paradigm and parliamentarians were primarily concerned with pensions for the white population. In fact, "policy debates were…predominantly conducted as if South Africa consisted of 4 million whites in a modern economy with few structural problems" (Beukes and Fourie 1992: 98). One aspect of the social pensions that did receive some criticism was the means test because it was perceived to "penalize the thrifty and set a premium on recklessness and thriftlessness" (USA 1955, Mr Gay: 1483). Critics argued that the means test was unfair to the elderly

who had saved and owned assets. Nevertheless, the government would not remove the means test given the high expected costs.

Overall, the social pension programme proved resilient. In the parliamentary debates in the 1950s, there was a strong sense that social pension was an expenditure that could not be cut:

> I agree with my friends over there that the cost structure is high. It was also high under their regime. The greatest expansion in the public service came under that Government and not under this Government. [But…do] they want us to abolish those services. Do they want us to abolish Social Welfare and all those things? No, of course not! (USA 1952, Minister of Economic Affairs: 68)

Although social pensions were not reformed in any way and only incrementally adjusted, the amount spent on pensions quadrupled from 1948 to 1960, given gradual increases in benefit levels and the number of beneficiaries (USA 1960, Mr van der Heever: 1859). The NP government's view on pensions was double-sided. On the one hand, it was sympathetic towards the needs of the elderly and believed that "we should try to see whether we cannot do more for our aged" (USA 1959: 568–569). This was not exclusive to the white population because—as explained earlier—the NP government accepted its (temporary) duty to care for other population groups under its "trusteeship". In addition, the government actively used social pensions for Africans to counter South Africa's negative image internationally (Patel 2015). On the other hand, the government had misgivings with the fact that only a small section of the (white) population "carried the rest on their back": "there are few countries in the world were such a small section of the taxable population does so much for those sections of the population who do not pay taxes" (USA 1956, Mr Haak: 2837).

To sum up, the *apartheid* government did not pursue any major policy reforms on pensions. The main new legislation was the Pension Funds Act of 1956, which was put in place to control and regulate pension funds. Calls for a national pension scheme were discarded: the government was content that private- and public-sector schemes would cover their constituency of Afrikaner workers because of their preferential

access to employment. Social pensions, inherited from the previous regime, were supplementary. Race differentials were not questioned because the idea of different levels of living standards was generally accepted. Incremental adjustments in benefit values and accessibility caused a continuous increase in social pension expenses, a concern for which would continue in the succeeding periods.

Shifting the Dominant Frame: From *Apartheid* to "Independent Nations"

When Hendrik Verwoerd—often named the architect of *apartheid*—became prime minister in 1958, the term *apartheid* was already in common use and a central frame. However, with Verwoerd's regime came another important change in the usages of concepts that would define the next two decades. Until then, the government had labelled the indigenous African populations "natives", implying that they were a homogenous group of people. However, now the government began to categorise Africans as distinct "Bantu ethnic groups", thereby laying the foundation for the development of separate independent "homelands", where each "ethnic" group had limited autonomy (Norval 1996). This dramatic shift in key concepts is illustrated in Fig. 7.2, which documents that around 1958 parliamentarians gradually replaced the term "native" with "Bantu". Figure 7.1 also makes it evident that a shift in frames took place by noting when the terms "homeland"/"homelands" replaced—although a few years later—the term "*apartheid*". However, these shifts in frames do not indicate a fundamental change in the underlying ideas of the *apartheid* project but rather a change in the justifications used to legitimise the regime.

Current events also prompted the shifts in discourse. The first months of 1960 was a difficult period for the *apartheid* government because of the Sharpeville shootings, international condemnation, the failed assassination attempt on Verwoerd, and the massive outflow of capital (Welsh 2009). In the South African media "the word *apartheid* itself was blamed as the source of the trouble" because it had negative connotations abroad (Van der Westhuizen 2007: 41). The government, instead, steered the

discourse away from "separate development" and towards "multi-nationalism" and "ethnic self-determination". The government claimed that Africans would be given the right to self-government in their homelands (Posel 1991). As a result, "independent nations" (i.e. homelands) became the key "non-social" frame of the subsequent period.

1961–1979: "Independent Nations" and the Government's Attempt to Abandon Social Responsibility for Non-white Groups

The 1960s and 1970s were in many ways a turbulent period in South Africa and included several dramatic events, such as the assassination of Verwoerd in 1966 and the Soweto uprising in 1976. However, very little changed with pension policies. The *apartheid* government focused on establishing homelands with the desired aim of freeing the government from the responsibility of taking care of non-white population groups and ultimately maintaining white domination. In practice, the homelands scheme required extensive funding to facilitate, and although government spending increased, it was insufficient. Given the affluence of the white population, there was little need to pursue any major pension reforms. The 1956 legislation continued to regulate contributory pensions, although the number of funds grew, and the main change in social pensions was the introduction of the "principle of discrimination", which underscores the embedded nature of the civilisation argument. Table 7.3 summarises the application of the onion skin model for this period and is further elaborated in the following.

Frame: Homelands ("Independent Nations")

Welsh (2009) argues that the homeland solution was Verwoerd's second phase of *apartheid*. Whereas the first phase was pre-eminently about ensuring white control and Afrikaner upliftment, "the new phase purported to advance African ethnic 'nations' to self-determination in their 'homelands'" (Welsh 67–68). The term "ethnic self-determination"

Table 7.3 The onion skin model applied to South Africa, 1961–1979

Frame	**"Independent nations"**—still responding to urban influx and campaigning for racial separation Global frames: right to political self-determination
Constructing social responsibility	Outsourcing social responsibility to **each "independent nation-state"**
Social question	**Racialised social question** – Maintaining white domination – Civilisation argument when useful
Policy paradigms	Increased welfare of whites Grappling with **"superfluous appendages"**
Welfare institutions	**Stability in pension schemes** – Separate schemes to address "separate needs" – "Principle of discrimination"

mimicked the language used further north in Africa by African nationalists fighting to achieve independence, and, in this way, the government tried to gain legitimacy with its critics by distancing itself from colonialism and, instead, co-opting the ideas of rights to political independence (Posel 1991; Klotz 1999).

The 1959 Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act established the statutory basis for homelands, and the 1971 Bantu Homelands Constitution Act completed the legislative framework (Welsh 2009; Thompson 2006). Practically, the government established "Bantu territories", and any black person in white areas and cities that was deemed "superfluous to 'white' South Africa's needs" was forcibly removed to an area the government identified as fitting the black person's ethnic identity (Van der Westhuizen 2007: 126). The state forcibly removed and internally relocated 3.5 million people between 1960 and 1982 (Marais 2011). In effect, the population of the homelands grew from 4.2 million in 1960 to 11 million in 1980. "About half of the black rural families had been rendered landless [by 1980] in what was basically rural slums without services, facilities or employment" because there was not enough land and economic investments were also sparse (Van der Westhuizen 2007: 101). The actual establishment of independent states took time, was costly, and, in many places, was incomplete. Transkei spearheaded the process and became "self-governing" in 1963 and "independent" in 1976.

Bophuthatswana became independent in 1977, Venda in 1979, and Ciskei in 1981. As the "nations" became independent, their citizens lost their South African citizenship (Thompson 2006).

Outsourcing Social Responsibility to "Independent Nation-States"

The goal of the homeland scheme was to enable African groups to take responsibility for their own advancement, and the homelands became semi-autonomous political structures with responsibility for certain policy fields, most notably social welfare, but not other areas, such as defence and economic planning (Legassick 1974). However, so-called self-determination allowed white South Africa to shy away from its responsibility for and contribution to the development of other communities because "what nation-state can be held responsible for the educational expenditure or the unemployment, old-age, and other welfare benefits needed in another sovereign land?" (Wilson and Ramphele 1989: 205).

In reality, white authorities did not provide the necessary economic support to make the new scheme work, and Afrikaners continued to lead the homeland bureaucratic systems. The homelands, therefore, remained totally economically dependent on the white regime for employment opportunities and funding. Furthermore, although the South African state continued to finance social welfare policies, there was less pressure to pass any pension reforms that could benefit the African population because "the extension of the services [should] be a function of the ability of the Bantu to pay" (Legassick 1974: 19; Picard 2005).

Racialised Social Question

The social issue of Afrikaner upliftment in the 1950s was no longer pressing. South Africa experienced tremendous economic growth in the 1950s and 1960s, and the Afrikaners particularly—benefitting from preferential employment—experienced increased affluence. By 1970 the Afrikaners had become a predominantly urban people, and their per

capita incomes rose in comparison to those of English-speaking whites: from 49:100 in 1946 to 70:100 in 1970. The total white population's per capita income grew by nearly 50 per cent during the 1960s. The decade was one of unprecedented affluence that led to the suggestion that white South Africans rivalled Californians "as the most wealthy community in the world" (Lodge 2017: 176; Welsh 2009). Africans also benefitted from industrial advancement; for instance, they gained from the increase in manufacturing employment opportunities. However, their income only rose by 23 per cent in the 1960s, and, thus, inequality between blacks and whites became even more accentuated (Lodge 2017).

In this context, the social question of the "civilised worker" lost some of its relevance because, within the new discourse on "independent nations", the strategy was to make the previously labelled "backward" and "uncivilised" rural areas attractive to Africans. Nevertheless, racial discrimination continued largely undisputed in the white-dominated South African Parliament, and the idea of different standards of living was still used when politically convenient.

Policy Paradigm: The "Superfluous Appendages"

Policy solutions were not clearly related to a social question in this period. Instead, the defining policy paradigms were predominately about maintaining white dominance, and central to this plan was the removal of as many Africans from white areas as possible. Consequently, the main perceived problem group that the government needed to address was that of the "superfluous appendages" (see below), although pension policies played a smaller role in solving social problems. As a government circular stated in 1961:

> It is accepted Government policy that the Bantu are only temporarily resident in the European areas…for as long as they offer their labour there. As soon as they become, for some reason or another, no longer fit or superfluous in the labour market, they are expected to return to their country of origin or the territory of the national unit where they fit in ethnically if they were not born and bred in the homeland. (quoted in Posel 1991: 234–235)

The government determined that "no stone is to be left unturned to achieve settlement in the homelands of non-productive Bantu" (Legassick 1974: 27), and, therefore, the policy grew more aggressive during the 1960s and the categories of "superfluous" people multiplied. Africans regarded as inessential to the "European" labour market included the aged, widows, the "unfit", and women with dependent children, as well as doctors, attorneys, traders, and others. The Deputy Minister of Justice, Mines and Planning G.F Froneman referred to these groups as the "superfluous appendages"—add-ons or extra "limbs" of the African labour force who were unnecessary in white areas. Helen Suzman was quite alone in the Parliament when she gave the voiceless majority's perspective:

> In other societies, the aged, the sick, the widows and the very young are treated with special care. In our society, they are singled out for especially harsh treatment…they are the 'superfluous appendages'. What does the honourable minister think the endorsing out of African families does to them? He is very proud of the number of people he has kept out of the urban areas, but never stops to think what…they live on and what their family lives are like. (Suzman 1970: 114–115)

Pension Policies

The *apartheid* government was intent on making the homelands more attractive than the cities to the Africans, which led to a redesign of the system that categorised the values of social pension benefits to different racial groups. In 1965, the government established a "principle of discrimination", according to which the government paid pension benefits in the ratio of 4:2:1 to whites, coloureds and Indians, and Africans, respectively. This principle was based on a civilisation argument in which "both the Indian and the Coloured live at very much lower levels than the White man and their income is also on a smaller scale" (Minister of Social Welfare and Pensions, as quoted in Devereux 2007: 544–545). The civilisation argument was, however, somehow reversed for Africans. In the 1950s, the government differentiated between rural and "detribalised" Africans who lived in the cities and, therefore, had lost their "tribal" identity and connections, which in turn led to differentiated pension

rates for Africans living in cities, towns, and rural areas, with higher rates for the former and the lowest for the latter.

However, by 1965, the government abolished this differentiation and set a uniform payment, which, in effect, slightly increased the pensions paid to Africans living in the rural areas while decreasing it for Africans living in the cities. Thus, in this case, the argument for different levels of civilisation no longer applied, because the government was intent on making the previously described "uncivilised" homelands attractive to ("superfluous") Africans and removing incentives to move to the cities (Wilson and Ramphele 1989; Devereux 2007; Posel 1991). Subsequently, pension levels started to even out somewhat to be in line with the "principle of discrimination". Thus, while the annual amount paid to white persons increased by 124 per cent from 1965 to 1975, the amount for the coloured and Indians increased by 154 per cent, and that for Africans by 238 per cent. Yet, at a ratio of 7:3:1, there was still some way to go to reach the 4:2:1 target (Devereux 2007). Moreover, while 3.2 per cent of the white population received a social old-age pension, this was only true of 1 per cent of blacks (RSA 1980, Mr Goodall: 2747).

Contemporaneously, the opposition again pleaded for a national contributory pension scheme and linked this proposal to the simultaneous removal of the much-criticised means test for social pensions, the idea being that with a national contributory scheme, social pensions would in time become (almost) redundant (RSA 1967; i.e. Mr Oldfield and Mr Fisher: 4873–4882). The government, however, did not want to remove the means test, although it was relaxed in various ways in the mid-1960s (RSA 1965, Minister of Social Welfare: 276–78). The government also seemed content to continue with the fragmented system of contributory pension funds whereby separate schemes could cater to "separate needs". In order to expand the pension schemes, the government would rather "try to compel … employers to … introduce private schemes … and … to conduct research on the basis of [the 1956 legislation to control and register all pension funds] to ascertain whether it will not be possible to make better provision for our workers in that way" (RSA 1967, Mr van der Walt: 4891).

Notwithstanding the government's resistance to pursuing any kind of pension reform, the number of pension funds increased from 6570 in

1972 to more than 12,000 by the end of the 1970s (RSA 1980, Mr Goodall: 274–2749). Given that it was estimated that 38.8 per cent of the economically active population in South Africa belonged to a pension scheme in 1976 (RSA 1980), we can assume that this meant that the white population was already well covered by the existing fragmented system, which again helps to explain the government's reluctance to expand contributory pensions to a national scheme for which the state would ultimately be responsible.

To sum up, there were no fundamental changes to pension policies in the 1960s and 1970s. The idea of different levels of civilisation was further entrenched and specified by the "principle of discrimination", and, although social pensions were improved slightly for Africans in rural areas, deprivation was widespread. Finally, the government saw no need to pursue any contributory pension reforms.

Shifting the Dominant Frame: From Independent Nations to an Ideational Void

The Soweto uprising in 1976 was "a seminal event in the decline of *apartheid*" and a turning point in many ways because it "occurred at a time when international isolation and pressure for economic sanctions were increasing" (Welsh 2009: 101). The "grand idea" of the homeland schemes became increasingly hard to maintain, as few believed the government was sincere about easing its domination (Van der Westhuizen 2007; Thompson 2006). This is also reflected in Fig. 7.1, which illustrates when the terms "homeland"/"homelands" started to lose traction. The Soweto events provoked some reforms in which "salary parity for teachers of all races with equal qualifications" was a key component (Welsh 2009: 108). The idea of parity was also raised with respect to social pensions around 1976. The opposition argued that discrimination based on race should be discontinued (RSA 1976, Mr Oldfield). During the same debate, the deputy minister of Social Welfare and Pensions stated that the "the Government has already declared itself prepared to … eliminate the gap with regard to the payments made to the various population groups" (RSA 1976: 7746). However, the "fact of the matter is that

it cannot be done at the moment" (RSA 1976: 7746). This is an important shift away from ideas of separate development and different levels of civilisation even if these changes were not immediately feasible according to the government. Nevertheless, within the government itself, there did not seem to be complete agreement on the idea of parity in wages and social benefits. For instance, the Minister of Information and the Interior Dr C.P. Mulder apparently—also in 1976—declared that "Blacks at the lower levels of work have to show greater productivity if the wage gap with the Whites was to be bridged" (RSA 1976, Mr Webber: 6110–6111). *Parity* became important in the 1980s debates, although the white parliamentarians also remained concerned about the possible cost implications of equal access to and value of pensions.

1980–1990: "A Country of Minorities" and Equalisation to an Extent

South Africa experienced a significant recession beginning in the late 1970s and extending into the 1980s, and many whites experienced a decline in income. Moreover, administration of the complex network of *apartheid* laws was extremely costly (Thompson 2006; Welsh 2009). International pressures, including increased anti-*apartheid* activism and the enforcement of international sanctions that signalled to the domestic opposition that there was international support for racial equality, further exacerbated the *apartheid* state's troubles (Klotz 1999). Table 7.4 summarises the application of the onion skin model for the period 1980-1990 and is further elaborated in the following.

Frame: Power-Sharing and Unclear Directions

The NP government recognised that given the crisis of the *apartheid* state, some racial concessions were unavoidable (Van der Westhuizen 2007). However, P.W. Botha, prime minister of the *apartheid* government, flatly denied anti-*apartheid* actors' suggestion of a unitary political system based on the principle of one-man-one-vote (Botha 1985). Botha

Table 7.4 The onion skin model applied to South Africa, 1980–1990

Frame	"**A country of minorities**" and reform impulses while seeking to maintain white dominance, no clear direction Global frames: increased anti-*apartheid* activism and sanctions urging racial equality
Constructing social responsibility	Recognition of the government's social responsibility **for everyone in the South African state** versus each to take care of oneself
Social question	Struggle for regime survival eclipsed the **social question** – **Parity**—the recognition that, *in time*, there must be equality between racial groups – Equalisation: "you get what you contribute"
Policy paradigms	**Cost containment** Impossibility of fulfilling increasing needs with the existing policies and political structures
Welfare institutions	**Cost containment** – Still no national insurance scheme – Move towards parity in benefits – Methods to "win hearts and minds"

remained committed to the idea of separate development, and "[f]undamental to his thinking was that South Africa was 'a country of minorities', each of which was to be accorded recognition. 'Groups' had to be the building blocks of any new system" (Welsh 2009: 209).

Although some political concessions were needed, the NP government could not contemplate giving Africans effective influence because the party feared the possible consequences of African majority rule on the white population (Thompson 2006). Instead, the NP drew inspiration from the US political scientist Arend Lijphard's idea of "consociationalism", which was essentially "power-sharing arrangements in heterogenous societies where minorities felt threatened by majority rule" (Van der Westhuizen 2007: 116). That the concept of power-sharing was dominant in the minds of white politicians in the early 1980s is also evident from Fig. 7.3. In addition, Fig. 7.3 highlights that, unlike previous periods in which we could identify a single ideational frame, there was no clear ideational direction in the 1980s, particularly after Botha's push for power-sharing based on his *apartheid*-related concept of "a country of minorities" faltered. For instance, although the idea of "parity" was discussed (see below), it was not a dominant frame. Instead, what became

the overriding issue in parliamentary debates was either a concern for regime survival or a movement for regime overthrow. Figure 7.3 illustrates the popularity of the concept "ANC", which is not an ideational frame but rather a context-based issue demonstrating an ideational void as conflicts increased and the future direction of the country became uncertain.

The government devised the Tricameral Constitution of 1983 as a solution to the problem of power-sharing, although it failed to gain credibility. Under this arrangement, whites shared power with Indian and coloured groups through the establishment of a new parliament consisting of three "uniracial" chambers (House of Assembly for whites, House of Representatives for coloureds, and House of Delegates for Indians). Africans were excluded from this arrangement. Each chamber became responsible for its "own affairs", such as social welfare, education, health, and local government, whereas a multiracial cabinet, representing all three chambers, became responsible for "general affairs", including taxation, defence, state security, law and order, commerce and industry, and African affairs (Thompson 2006).

Social Responsibility: Each to Their Own or White Obligation?

We can view the tricameral constitution as a mechanism for the white government's further divesting of responsibility for coloureds and Indians, who were now also accountable for "their own" social issues, as was also the case—at least in principle—in the ten homelands. However, members of the Conservative Party (right-wing opponents of the NP government, who were voted into parliament in 1983) felt that in reality (and unfairly in their view), the white population was still bearing the burden for other population groups:

> If we look at the Constitution, which was passed last year, it is clear that social welfare is the first matter to be classified as an own affair but—and this is the snag—subject to any general law with regard to norms and standards for the provision of financing for welfare services. Therefore, it is

> actually a general affair from beginning to end … one must keep the contribution of the taxpayers, who are represented here in the House of Assembly, in mind. For the financial year 1982–83, it amounts to R3 152 million, and 2,206,000 people who are economically active paid it by way of personal income tax. The taxpayers of the House of Representatives paid R77 million, and 987,000 economically active people paid it. The amount for the House of Delegates was R74 million, and 235,030 people contributed to the State coffers. (RSA 1985, Dr Snyman: 2098)

Thus, some white politicians continued to feel that each group should take responsibility for only their members. Yet, within the NP, there was a growing recognition that somehow the *apartheid* system should transform and that the homelands' funding should by supported by white taxpayers (Hodder-Williams and Hugo 1976), that is, the state should take *responsibility for all its citizens* (including those living in the homelands). However, given the economic recession, international sanctions, a shrinking tax capacity, a sluggish economy, an excessive bureaucracy, and increased spending on defence, security, and black education, there was limited financial capacity to meet all needs (Terreblanche 2002; Thompson 2006).

Eclipsed Social Question: Equality How?

Although the government committed to move towards parity in wages and social benefits in the late 1970s (van der Berg 1997), exactly how parity was perceived to relate to equalisation is somewhat confusing. The Minister of Social Welfare and Pensions had a rather convoluted suggestion that brings to mind the civilisation argument of earlier periods but without the race element somehow. Using the figures from a research report on the living standards of various groups, the minister argued:

> Does a Black person who spends R8 on housing have to receive the same pension as the White person who spends R55 on housing?… I think we should completely remove the element of colour from pensions. We should adjust pensions to people's basic needs in respect of food, clothing, housing, and miscellaneous things, for if we did that, it would no longer be

> necessary to speak of Black, Coloured, Indian, or White pensions. Surely there is not a single hon member of the official Opposition who can rise and say that if a person's housing costs him R8, we should give him R55. On the other hand, surely there is no one who can say that if a person's actual expenditure on housing is R55, we should give him R8. (RSA 1980, Minister of Social Welfare and Pensions: 7317–7318)

The minister emphasised that equalisation for contributory pensions did not imply that "the man who contributed least should get out the same as the man who contributed most" (RSA 1980, Minister of Social Welfare and Pensions: 2777). Put more bluntly, although the minister had earlier argued to remove the "element of colour" from contributory pensions, he elaborated that "the idea of egalitarianism must not be promoted in such a way that the White man's contribution must carry the black man" (RSA 1980, Minister of Social Welfare and Pensions: 2778). Therefore, it seems that the NP government's understanding of equalisation in the early 1980s translates to "you get what you contribute" and that actual redistribution through social pensions should remain limited. The minister's arguments highlight a search for justifications for inequality in a time of great insecurity, and given the intense political climate, the regime's struggle for survival largely eclipsed social issues.

Policy Paradigms and Pension Policies: Cost Containment

The overarching policy paradigm of the time, given the government's financial constraints, was one of cost containment, which is also evident in the debates on pension policies. Opposition parties to the left of the government (i.e. the Progressive Federal Party and the South African Party) had not stopped their criticism of the means test for social pensions, which "to many people…is only slightly less complicated than Einstein's theory of relativity" (RSA 1980, Mr Widman: 2767). However, like the NP, they were concerned with the potential rising costs of social pensions in the years to come:

> In 1968, there were 98,134 old-age pensioners receiving an amount of R35,587,000 per annum. Eleven years later, in 1979, there were 137,760 old-age pensioners to whom an amount of R142,553,000 was paid out every year … Working on the present basis, we shall find that in 20 years there will be 216,952 pensioners receiving R352,485,000 per annum. I am referring to Whites alone. What would the position be if other races were included and annual increases were taken into account in this regard? I do not want to think about it; the amount would be astronomical. (RSA 1980, Mr Rossouw: 2738–2739)

The potential cost implications were also "astronomical" because "we in South Africa are committed to the equalisation of pensions for all races in South Africa" (RSA 1980, Mr Goodall: 2747). As a result, the opposition argued that there is an urgent need to establish a national contributory pension scheme "without delay" and presented a motion to that effect (RSA 1980, Mr Rossouw: 2736–2737). The minister responded that a national scheme would "involve everyone", but "one certainly could not permit the Whites to carry the Blacks, the Coloureds, and the Indians in regard to such a scheme. They would have to look after themselves" (RSA 1980, Minister of Social Welfare and Pensions: 2773–2774). However, the minister promised to look into the matter, which in effect meant that the government once again shelved the idea of a national contributory scheme (a select committee was only appointed in 1984) (RSA 1985, Deputy Minister of Health and Welfare: 2125).

Despite earlier confusion on the terms of equalisation, the government remained committed to parity in social pensions, and the gaps between the races continued to narrow, although much too slowly according to the opposition on the left (RSA 1988). In 1985, white pensioners still received twice as much as African pensioners. Even so, "White pensioners, receiving R180 per month and living alone, could only just (and not always) keep their heads above water. Black pensioners, averaging R79 per month, were below the poverty datum line" (Wilson and Ramphele 1989: 64).

It was particularly Afrikaner farmers and lower-class people who were hit hardest among the white population by the economic recessions, and they found support from the newly formed Conservative Party that

argued their case in the Parliament: "it is the White who has become drastically impoverished during the past year as a result of redistribution of income" (RSA 1985, Mr Snyman: 2095). The Conservative Party members were intent on defending whites' social pensions and felt provoked by debates to equalise benefits in the other chambers:

> We are sick and tired of a Minister like the hon Minister Hendrickse saying he will freeze White pensions. Let me tell this hon Minister to keep his hands off White pensioners. Let him concern himself with his own affairs and levy taxes in his own House—not in this one! … We are tired of being milked by every group in this country and then being accused of discrimination. (RSA 1985, Mr Barnard: 872)

In the months leading up to this debate in early 1985, a new cycle of resistance, protest, and violence had flared up (Welsh 2009). It has been suggested that the government increased social pensions to the African population in the 1980s, not only as part of a move towards parity but also to "win-hearts-and-minds" (Devereux 2007; Welsh 2009). Although it is hard to find evidence of a government's covert motivations, it is striking that the government announced early in 1985 that old-age pensioners of all races would receive an R14 increase in their payments as of the first of October as well as a one-time bonus of R36 in May 1985 (RSA 1985, Minister of Cooperation, Development, and Education: 2372–2373). Therefore, even in the context of cost containment and widespread concerns over an uncontrollable social pensions budget, the government made additional payments, presumably to appease the population at a time of increased conflict.

In 1986, the mounting resistance led Botha to abolish the pass laws, which had been used to restrict the movement of the black population. Although the government had passed other reforms and made various concessions, urban influx control was "the central plank of *apartheid*" (Welsh 2009: 215). The ANC was no longer easily ignored, and the fundamental opposition to the NP government—and the *apartheid* regime—was increasingly extra-parliamentary (Welsh 2009). Any noteworthy debates on pension policies were limited after the mid-1980s; the majority of parliamentarians (except those on the right) now accepted the move

to parity, and the main debate centred on the pace with which it could be achieved within the given budget constraints (RSA 1988). Full parity in pensions was reached in 1993, the year before the country held the first free democratic elections. Spending on social old-age pensions increased from 0.59 per cent of the GDP in 1970 to 1.82 per cent by 1993 (van der Berg 1997). Consequently, social pensions were resilient and a constant feature of the *apartheid* era. Contributory pensions for their part did expand, but in fragmented ways, and the state's functions remained merely regulatory, ensuring that the pension funds catered to those with the ability to contribute and, hence, benefit.

Conclusion

Ideational frames changed remarkably in nature during the *apartheid* era, but these shifts do not reflect policy changes but rather the need to modify ideational justifications for the existing policy. Table 7.5 summarises the ideational layers, first, during the period in which the concept of separate development dominated (1948–1979) and, second, during the period of the 1980s when ideational justifications could no longer be maintained. Both the 1950s "separate development" frame and the 1960s–1970s "independent nations" frame sit firmly within the *apartheid* ideology in which the state's social responsibility primarily targeted whites. The main social question was how to separate the "civilised" whites from the "uncivilised" blacks and reflects the policy paradigm focusing on white upliftment with only charitable concern for blacks. Based on these underlying ideas, a continuation of the fragmented and racially graded pension system suited the *apartheid* government. In the 1980s, the *apartheid* government scrambled to find ways to maintain white power and limit the financial costs to the white population. Prime Minister Botha's insistence on maintaining group rights ("each group to take care of themselves") conflicted with the emerging global norm of racial equality, which was based on an individual-rights paradigm. Eventually, the former ideological stance had to give way, but it was not replaced by a clear ideational vision. In the end, finally, the complex

Table 7.5 Social protection in *apartheid* South Africa: changing ideas and policies

	Changes in politics and society	Social questions and social ideas	Broader ideational frames and contexts	External ideas and models	Key actors	Policies, legislation, and programmes
1948–1979	*Apartheid*	Civilised-workers question	Racist ideologies	Independent nations	White-dominated government	Continuation of pension systems
1980–1990	Disintegration of society	Stifled social question	Parity	Equality	Anti-regime activists	Move to parity in benefits

apartheid system and, with it, the whites-only Parliament and racialised old-age security scheme withered away.

What is striking about the South African case during *apartheid* is how the idea of social responsibility, justified with reference to civilisation arguments, was constructed to serve a discriminatory, racialised system. Advocating the idea of separate development and independent nations allowed the white political elite to focus on the welfare of their "own people" while blinding themselves to the obvious responsibility the government had for other racial groups. The white regime could then construct social support for other population groups, for instance old-age pensions, as charity to people for whom the government was not directly responsible. However, the government could not maintain the regime's ideational foundation because it had constructed social responsibility based on the different civilisation levels of various ethnic groups—an idea already dying out in the mid-twentieth century and belatedly in South Africa. Today, when countries make distinctions between citizens deserving of social policy and others, i.e. migrants, who are not deserving of state contributions, the construction of a state's social responsibility and its consequent impacts on policy are highly relevant areas of research, and the *apartheid* state is a reminder of how far policy can be pushed with reference to ideational and normative justifications.

Appendix

Data Collection and Sources

The primary data are the Hansards: Debates in the South African Parliament from the years 1948 to 1990. I selected this data source, first, because I seek to gauge the ideas, views, and justifications of the *apartheid* government's ministers and politicians as well as those of the opposition white politicians, as they, particularly the former, were the primary policymakers in South Africa during this period. Second, using contemporary debates permits my own assessment of what was said—there and then—instead of necessitating reliance on stakeholders' subsequent

recollections and (perhaps misleading/self-proclaimed) interpretations. Third, the volume of the debates is immense and rich. While the immenseness of material creates its own challenges, which I have sought to handle in various ways as explained in the following, the Hansards are an undisturbed picture of the spoken thoughts and opinions of white politicians during the *apartheid* era.

The Parliamentary Library in Cape Town kindly made the Hansards available to me as PDF files. Each PDF file (volume) typically covers about three months of debates of a given year and has an average length of about 1400 pages; each volume is saved under its year and a letter (a, b, c, or d) to clarify which period of that year the document covers (for example, 1950b is the second volume of 1950). While almost every single year is represented in my data by at least one—often more—volume(s), there are also gaps, either because certain volumes have not (yet) been made available to me, or because some volumes have been poorly scanned and I cannot search them. While some critical knowledge might be missing, I feel confident that I have a sufficient representation of data to meaningfully interpret the ideational foundations of pension debates in South Africa. In all, my active database of the Hansards consists of 141 volumes and almost 200,000 pages.

Quantitative Analysis: Frequencies and Word Selection

As the first step in my analysis, I sought to substantiate the dominant "frames" that white politicians used, i.e. what did the white political elite perceive as key concepts and challenges in South Africa (for the theoretical background of frames and non-frames, see Chap. 1). I used computational linguistic techniques to show the frequencies of key terms as they appeared in each Hansard and the temporal changes in the use of key terms across the whole collection of Hansards over time (as illustrated in Figs. 7.1, 7.2, and 7.3). I opted to use all the Hansards available, even though the number of volumes per year is not even. However, as my purpose is to illustrate trends in word use and changes over time and each volume is roughly the same length, I do not see a problem with this method of counting.

I selected words based on reading historical sources and academic works. I expected some terms to matter at certain times and less so at other times (as the figures also illustrate), i.e. ideas/ideologies such as "segregation", "*apartheid*", and "homelands", labels such as "native" and "Bantu", and concepts/justifications such as "self-determination" and "parity". Nevertheless, some words could not be used—although relevant—because they could have numerous meanings and therefore would provide a misleading picture. For instance, the idea of "independence" (for "Bantu" nations), the label "blacks" (representing the African or non-white population), and the justification of "rights" are all examples of words that can be used in many other contexts beyond the one relevant to this study, and, therefore, I have not included them.

Qualitative Analysis: Constructive Reading

To get an in-depth understanding of the pension debates, I picked volumes in which (based on previous word counts) the terms "pension" and "contributory pension" were particularly prevalent. I conducted a careful reading of these selected volumes (11 in all, representing the years 1951, 1955, 1956, 1959, 1960, 1965, 1967, 1970, 1976, 1980, and 1985). Since I seek to understand the broader debates surrounding the specific discussions on pension policies, I do not believe that a computation-based selection of "snippets" of text would allow me to understand some of the underlying tones and emotions involved. Consequently, I read longer sections of parliamentarians' speeches and discussions related to pension bills or other topics in which pensions somehow became an issue. Based on this careful reading, I have collected more than 80 pages of direct debates, which I then, in a subsequent reading, boiled down to a 13-page data overview in which I highlighted opinions for and against social pensions and a national contributory pension scheme, respectively, and the race-related justifications for these opinions. The narrative in this chapter is drawn from this final data overview and other information gathered from the Hansards, as well as additional information and historical data available in other literature (listed in the references).

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